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Printed by Mirza Mohammad Sadiq at the Ripon Printing Press,
Bull Road, Lahore and published by Mr. Balkrishna for the
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It is obviously not possible for a Mussalman to appreciate the caste-system or *varna* of the Hindus, which puts him in the lowest order of sub-castes. Fear of *shirk*—the *bete noire* of the Mussalmans—has often prevented him from appreciating the spiritual symbolism of Hindu idols. But with these two reservations, sensible and educated Mussalmans of all ages not excluding our own have never failed to appreciate the cultural heritage of the land of their birth.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

MR. HAMID RAZA in *The Cultural Role of India* has vitalized those great currents which from time to time in the last four thousand years have flowed into and enriched the Indian mind and spirit. Without over-simplifying their inherent differences he has perceived in the main cultural streams of ancient India, Islam and the British connection an essential homogeneity that augurs well for the future of the country. His painstaking work, which reveals the penetrating and dispassionate grasp of a scholar, is importantly supplemented by an extensive and valuable bibliography. In a day when from Freiburg to Formosa the word *culture* is bandied about with a hundred different meanings the achievement of this book in presenting a fresh analysis of the well-springs of Indian life will be widely appreciated.

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Judged by this standard, the soul of the Indian people is reflected in their intellectual life whose steady outflow has enriched the world of human knowledge. Indian culture is possessed of some latent strength by which it has resisted the ravages of time. India today stands at the parting of ways. Political and social changes have followed in bewildering succession. Her eclectic culture has to envisage all that is best in Eastern and Western cultures. No malicious detraction of Indian civilization will hide its true greatness for the modern world. Intellectual dishonesty is perhaps the one besetting sin of all superficial Western scholarship in relation to Islam and India, and I have definitely kept myself aloof from personal prejudices and predilections in assessing the values of Indian culture. But *The Cultural Role of India* is no mere echo of other men's ideas. I have tried to make an independent approach to the subject of Indology,

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I take this opportunity of thanking Sir S. Radhakrishnan, Fellow of the British Academy and Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics in the University of Oxford, for contributing a Foreword to my book. I feel much grateful to Professor Mohammad Habib for his Introduction. I should also like to thank Mr. Phillips Talbot of the University of Illinois, U.S.A., for his introductory note to this work.

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¹ *Al-Beruni's India*, Preface, p. xxii, vol. I.

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religious and philosophical background. India had a clear understanding of the central unity in the midst of all diversity, and tried to ignore differences of value in different things, for she knows differences would make life impossible. The silent influence of India's vision of the unity of all things in God has been accompanied by her cultural conquests everywhere. All the mighty impulses that entered into India were synthesised on the same plan. All religions she welcomed, since realised from the cloudy heights of contemplation that the spiritual landscape at the hilltop is the same, though the pathways from the valley are different. To those who were wandering at random in the plains without suspecting that all roads lead to the same top, she says, "Raise your eyes. Things in the valley separate us. Up yonder, high above us, we are all one. The variety of ways has meaning at the foot of the hill, but if we understand what they signify on the snowy summits, we shall know that all are reaching out for God." What wonder, then, that India with her assimilative genius may succeed in synthesising the warring creeds that have met on her hospitable soil! Her soul has always yearned for the greater unity which underlies the diversity of phenomena. All

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THE CHARACTER OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION

THE ancient Indian civilization had its own ideal of perfection towards which its efforts were directed. "The ideal that India tried to realise," says Tagore, "led her best men to the isolation of a contemplative life, and the treasures that she gained for mankind by penetrating into the the mysteries of reality cost her dear in the sphere of worldly success. Yet, this also was a sublime achievement, it was a supreme manifestation of that human aspiration which knows no limit, and which has for its object nothing less than the realisation of the Infinite."³ India, therefore, placed all her emphasis upon the harmony that exists between the individual and the Universal. It was the aspiration of ancient India to live and move and have its joy in Brahma, the all-conscious and all-pervading spirit by extending its field of consciousness all over the world. The Upanishad

³ Rabindranath Tagore, *Sadhana: The Realisation of Life*, pp. 13-14.

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The history of India is a history of thirty centuries of human culture and progress. Each one of its periods will favourably compare for its

⁴ S. Radhakrishnan, *The Heart of Hindustan*, pp. 56-57.

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Of neither night nor day was any token.
By its inherent force the One breathed windless :
No other thing than that beyond existed.

"Darkness there was at first by darkness hidden ;
Without distinctive marks, this all was water.
That which, becoming, by the void was covered,
That One by force of heat came into being.

"Desire entered the One in the beginning :
It was the earliest seed, of thought the product.
The sages, searching in their hearts with wisdom,
Found out the bond of being in non-being.

"Their ray extended light across the darkness :
But was the One above or was it under ?
Creative force was there and fertile power :
Below was energy, above was impulse.

"Who knows for certain ? Who shall here declare it ?
Whence was it born and whence came this creation ?
The gods were born after this world's creation :
Then who can know from whence it hath risen ?

"None knoweth whence creation hath risen ;
And whether he has or has not produced it :
He who surveys it in the highest heaven,
He only knows, or haply he may know not."

This " Song of Creation " has been extolled as containing " the flower of Indian thought. " It may not expound a clear-cut and rigid monotheism of the semitic type but therein we have the quintessence of monistic thought. In this

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That which, becoming, by the void was covered,
That One by force of heat came into being.

"Desire entered the One in the beginning :
It was the earliest seed, of thought the product.
The sages, searching in their hearts with wisdom,
Found out the bond of being in non-being.

"Their ray extended light across the darkness :
But was the One above or was it under ?
Creative force was there and fertile power :
Below was energy, above was impulse.

"Who knows for certain ? Who shall here declare it ?
Whence was it born and whence came this creation ?
The gods were born after this world's creation :
Then who can know from whence it hath risen ?

"None knoweth whence creation hath risen ;
And whether he has or has not produced it :
He who surveys it in the highest heaven,
He only knows, or haply he may know not."

This " Song of Creation " has been extolled as containing " the flower of Indian thought. " It may not expound a clear-cut and rigid monotheism of the semitic type but therein we have the quintessence of monistic thought. In this

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⁷ *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. 1, Ed. E. J. Rapson, p. 272.

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Nanak (A. D. 1469-1539), which have left permanent marks on the Hindu faith, were literally inspired by the spirit of Islam. "The monotheistic elements of Hinduism," observes Professor S. Radhakrishnan, "have become more emphasised after the spread of Islam in India."⁹ Modern Hinduism, thanks to its assimilative genius, has been led by Islam to democratise its institutions and to be "more emphatic in its denunciation of imperfect conceptions of God and cruder modes of worship."¹⁰

As a religion, Hinduism knows little of theological puzzles. Al-Beruni honestly observes that "on the whole there is very little disputing about theological topics about themselves (*i.e.*, Hindus); at the most they fight with words, but they will never stake their soul or body or property on religious controversy." In treating of the Hindu religion we should follow the lead of Al-Beruni in distinguishing between that of the educated classes and that of the ignorant, superstitious masses. "The Hindus," says Al-Beruni, "believe with regard to God that He is one, eternal, without beginning and end, acting by free will, all-mighty, all-wise, living, giving life,

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¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

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Hinduism is a process, not a result ; a growing tradition, not a fixed rule. Viewed in its historical background, "Hinduism becomes a slow growth across the centuries incorporating all the good and true things as well as much that is evil and erroneous, through a constant endeavour, which is not always successful, is kept up to throw out the unsatisfactory elements. Hinduism has the large comprehensive unity of a living organism with a fixed orientation."¹³ Despite its limitations, Hinduism remains the land-mark of India's spiritual heritage. "It is based on the intuition of the oneness and

¹² Al-Beruni's *India*, Vol. I, pp. 45-62.

¹³ S. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life*, p. 41.

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¹⁶ C. E. M. Joad, *The Story of the Indian Civilization*, pp. 28-29.

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¹⁹ *The Legacy of India*, p. 123.

²⁰ The Expression means "There is no god but God."

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²¹ Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art? and Essays on Art* (Eng. Translation), p. 57.

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Not architecture ! as all others are,
But the proud passion of an Emperor's love
Wrought into living stone, with gleams and soards
With body of beauty shringing soul and thought ;

.....as when some face

Divinely fair unveils before our eyes—
Some woman beautiful unspeakably—
And the blood quickens, and the spirit leaps,
And will to worship bends the half-yielded knees,
While breath forgets to breathe. So is the Taj."

The Taj is not merely a mausoleum, a sepulchre fashioned after ordinary canons, but a distinct architectonic ideal, symbolical of a woman's grace and beauty. All criticism regarding the effeminacy of the architecture pays the highest compliments to the genius of the

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the customary feeling and the instinct of all men...And universal art, by uniting the most different people in one common feeling by destroying separation, will educate people to union and will show them, not by reason but by life itself, the joy of universal union reaching beyond the bounds set by life."²² This function of art was best accomplished by the Mughals in India. Their art was the best exponent of the human spirit and conformed to what is permanent and above criticism in human life. Their sublime achievements in art and administration demolished once for all the barriers of isolation between man and man, and evolved a concept of common nationality within the range of practical politics. They denuded art of all political garb and made it a vehicle of spiritual union and brotherhood. Mughal art was not merely ideal but generically ideal. "It not only seeks beauty, but it is engaged in a social search for beauty, and any form of beauty recognised by an artist becomes at once a part of the common stock." With a glorious tradition for its splendour, Indian art possesses a stability which is not liable to be affected by the emer-

²² *Ibid.*, p. 288.

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"Not for these I raise

The songs of thanks and praise :

But for those obstinate questionings

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"As long as mountain ranges stand
And rivers flow upon the earth
So long will this Ramayana
Be told upon the lips of men."

The Gupta period may be said to be the Augustan age of Indian literature. Drama and poetry reached their climax during this period, and Indian dramaturgy found its highest achievement in Kalidasa, the Shakespeare of India.

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"If thy spirit seeks to brood
On Hari glorious, Hari good ;

³⁶ Sir William Jones, Lassen, and Sir Edwin Arnold favour an allegorical view of *Gita-govinda*. Frazer in his *A Literary History of India* seems to have taken a balanced view of the character of Jayadeva's work. I believe that it reflects the contemporary spirit of Bhakti prevalent in mediæval India.

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²⁸ Iqbal's writings have been appreciated by European thinkers and statesmen. His outstanding work—*The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Oxford University Press)—constitutes an original contribution and has been highly evaluated by the Western critics. The scientific tenor of his writings appeals to the religious consciousness of the West. Martin Sprengling is constrained to admit this fact when he says: "Sir Mohammad Iqbal is not as well known, except for a small elite, in the Western world as he deserves to be... Mohammad Iqbal may not be a historian, but he is a theological and religious philosopher of the very first excellence, a diamond mine of extraordinary quality. Since he is a Muslim this is not as easy for the West to recognise, as in the case of the more abstruse and obscure Tagore, the no less keen

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²⁹ K. G. Saiyidain, *Iqbal's Educational Philosophy*, p. 8.

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the East and West, Tagore makes a wide appeal to the Western imagination. His intellectual background is essentially Aryan, but the influences of Christianity and Islam are frankly manifest throughout his work. Being a leader of the Brahmo Samaj in India, Tagore belongs to Hindu Civilisation. His *Gitanjali* contains an incoherent mass of Aryan thought and brooding at once placid, dreamy, and morbid. His poetry yet represents something new in Bengali literature.

"The teaching and attitude of *Gitanjali* would never have surprised the West as they did, if the hymns of the Brahmo Samaj had been known. These hymns have not received the notice they deserve, as influences in his religious poetry."

(E. J. Thompson, *Rabindra Nath Tagore*). Besides Tagore, there is another Bengali poet, Nazr-ul-Islam, whose revolutionary output is in no way inferior to any great Indian poet. He may claim the attention of the West for his ardent sense of revolt, his pent-up wrath against capitalism, his exposition of the failures and shortcomings of contemporary society. Sarojini Naidu, the poet, orator and politician, is the hope of future India. Gifted with rare poetic vision, her poetry has captured the imagination of the West. It has a soothing influence on the wearied

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the East and West, Tagore makes a wide appeal to the Western imagination. His intellectual background is essentially Aryan, but the influences of Christianity and Islam are frankly manifest throughout his work. Being a leader of the Brahmo Samaj in India, Tagore belongs to Hindu Civilisation. His *Gitanjali* contains an incoherent mass of Aryan thought and brooding at once placid, dreamy, and morbid. His poetry yet represents something new in Bengali literature.

"The teaching and attitude of *Gitanjali* would never have surprised the West as they did, if the hymns of the Brahmo Samaj had been known. These hymns have not received the notice they deserve, as influences in his religious poetry."

(E. J. Thompson, *Rabindra Nath Tagore*). Besides Tagore, there is another Bengali poet, Nazr-ul-Islam, whose revolutionary output is in no way inferior to any great Indian poet. He may claim the attention of the West for his ardent sense of revolt, his pent-up wrath against capitalism, his exposition of the failures and shortcomings of contemporary society. Sarojini Naidu, the poet, orator and politician, is the hope of future India. Gifted with rare poetic vision, her poetry has captured the imagination of the West. It has a soothing influence on the wearied

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³² *The Legacy of India*, pp. 367-68.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 346.

³⁴ *Hindu Astronomy*, p. 323.

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²⁸ Beni Prasad, *The Theory of Government in Ancient India*, p. 345.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 345.

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writers of Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries." ³⁰ The reaction of these rules was bound to be far-reaching in Hindu political thought. Hindu religious ideas began to predominate in both the state and the church, in fact the state began to represent an agency to enforce a part of the religious ordinances. Religion assigned a proper function to every part of the state, to transgress which was not only a crime against the constituted authority but also a sin against the Divine Being.

Now the concept of *Danda* (coercion or chastisement) is one of the fundamental ideas in Hindu political theory. Vidya-pati gives us the popular conception of an ideal Hindu monarch as one "who is well versed in science of punishment, enjoys pleasures, conquers the four quarters, kills all his foes in battle, offers oblations to the fire and sacrifices to the deities and distributes gold among the supplicants." But the government is something more than the wielder of *Danda*; it is the constant teacher and guide of the people. In the Mahabharata, in the Bhagavata and elsewhere we are told how king Prithu taught the people to level the surface of the earth, grow cereals in it, milk cows, and so on.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 351.

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Hindu thinkers seem to have invested envoys, messengers, and spies with great importance and made them a regular tool of governmental machinery. The importance attached to diplomatic agents is to be explained partly by the preference which writers occasionally display for diplomacy in war. Manu says that "a king should try to conquer his foes by conciliation, by gifts and by creating dissension, used either separately or conjointly, never by fighting." Kamandaka also prefers victories through dip-

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lomatic skill. In the old imperial Hindu theory of commending the ruler, Beni Prasad Chaudhary, in his *Interstate Relations in Ancient India*, has shown that the triumph of a ruler became a 'moral triumph' from moral considerations. A number of states, in the event of war, lead to a balance of power in interstate relations. The law, and the moral law, mastering the ruler, as in the case of Italy, often became a moral triumph. An unprovoked attack, disapproval of the ruler, affairs of the ruler, pleasant as they appeared." ³³

It shows that in ancient India the governmental unit of administration was the ruler, and the ruler was the unit of administration.

activities. In its own affairs, the village enjoyed a complete autonomy and may be said to have led to what is known as *Panchayati Raj*. It is the village *Panchayat* which contains the seeds of modern self-governing institutions. The method of election to the *Panchayat* was partly democratic and partly dependent upon chance. Women could become members of the *Panchayat*, and inscriptions contain references to women members of the village communes. The Indian village communities, once familiarised by Sir Henry Maine, have found a host of enthusiastic but uncritical admirers in modern times. "It is probable that the tendency towards self-government evidenced by these various forms of corporate activity received fresh impetus from the Buddhist rejection of the authority of the priesthood and further by its repudiation of caste. It is, indeed, to the Buddhist books that we have to turn for an account of the manner in which the affairs of these early examples of representative self-governing institutions were conducted. And it may come as a surprise to many to learn that in the Assemblies of the Buddhists in India two thousand years and more ago are to be found the rudiments of our own

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activities. In its own affairs, the village enjoyed a complete autonomy and may be said to have led to what is known as *Panchayati Raj*. It is the village *Panchayat* which contains the seeds of modern self-governing institutions. The method of election to the *Panchayat* was partly democratic and partly dependent upon chance. Women could become members of the *Panchayat*, and inscriptions contain references to women members of the village communes. The Indian village communities, once familiarised by Sir Henry Maine, have found a host of enthusiastic but uncritical admirers in modern times. "It is probable that the tendency towards self-government evidenced by these various forms of corporate activity received fresh impetus from the Buddhist rejection of the authority of the priesthood and further by its repudiation of caste. It is, indeed, to the Buddhist books that we have to turn for an account of the manner in which the affairs of these early examples of representative self-governing institutions were conducted. And it may come as a surprise to many to learn that in the Assemblies of the Buddhists in India two thousand years and more ago are to be found the rudiments of our own

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No study in the structure and practical working of political institutions in ancient India is possible within the scope of this book. Indian political theory "should be studied at every step in the light of the actual working of institutions; its sources should be traced in practice; its conformity to contemporary usage examined, and its real influence on events

³⁵ *Vide* the Marquess of Linlithgow's Address at the Silver Jubilee Session of the Indian Science Congress, Calcutta, December, 1937.

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VIII

THE LEGACY OF INDIA

WE have traversed a long passage from the vedic to modern India. Her rich heritage is expanding before the wistful eyes of humanity. India is immortal. Her history belies her geography. She has never been completely isolated. Alexander the Great was the first to break down the wall of separation between the East and the West, and India thenceforth seems to have diffused its ideas in the West. Gnostic Christianity itself was "Orientalism in a Hellenic mask" and was influenced by Indian ideas. Al-Beruni observes that "if a science or idea has once conquered the whole world, every nation appropriates part of it." Hence the legacy of India is not static, but a living, growing tradition. We may contemplate the civilization of India "as a huge moving mass of thought and usage, intensely concentrated upon a great number of differentiated nuclei, but enmeshed with nerve threads linking them in manifold and partly capricious complexity with one another." The practical skill with which Hinduism has steadily absorbed the

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ence of Islam.⁴¹ India's political and national destiny—every aspect of her cultural activity and life—is as wide as life itself. Sarojini Naidu truly observes: "Many nations had contributed to enrich Indian culture and life and, therefore, they should prove to the world that Indian culture did not merely excel in metaphysical genius and in undying philosophy but that there was a dynamic force in it, namely, the gift of Islam which had played an important part in their national life as well." We cannot speak of India as we do of Syria, Babylonia, and Egypt; for India's history is still being made and her civilization is still functioning. To penetrate into the heart of her culture and civilization we should study the inner springs of her thought. Despite her continuous struggle with superstition and dogma, India has held for centuries to the ideal of the spirit. German transcendentalism, American idealism, Irish renaissance all indicate the

⁴¹ Dr. Tarachand's admirable thesis—*The Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*—is an excellent work of research on the subject. The work requires the expert collaboration and co-operation of a number of scholars, who may study the subject in more exhaustive details and reproduce the results of their researches in the form of monographs. The *Historical Research Institute* of the Aligarh Muslim University and the *Darul-Musannefin* of Azamgarh have at present undertaken this important work.

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